

Scenario #4: “Snowmageddon”

The Scenario

Climate change is wreaking havoc on the nation this winter. Cold temperatures and predominant winds from the northwest have created a dip in the jet stream in January. The wind is bringing cold and moisture from Canada into the central United States. Snow has blanketed several states, including those states that rarely receive snowfall – let alone in numbers that are measurable. The bulk of the snow fell over the third week in January. Here are some of the totals from this storm as compared to the average annual totals:

State	Storm Totals	Average Annual*
Montana	30	38
Wyoming	32	91
Colorado	38	19
North Dakota	54	51
South Dakota	54	44
Nebraska	47	26
Kansas	44	15
Oklahoma	32	8
Texas	20	1.5

*Average yearly snowfall by American state. National Climate Data Center information obtained from <https://www.currentresults.com/Weather/US/average-snowfall-by-state.php>

It is now the last week in January, and it is still snowing with another ten inches expected in higher elevations with four to six inches expected for most areas in the path of the storm. However, most of the United States has already been largely affected by this storm. Furthermore, some of the southeastern states outside of the snow area are receiving precipitation in the form of ice and heavy rain, making roadways slippery and unpassable. People across the nation have coined this week-long event “Snowmageddon.”

Many of the northern states such as Wyoming and the Dakotas are used to handling snow and are managing, although the storm totals are quite large for what they typically receive each year (see chart above). It is the central and southern states that are struggling as they are not equipped to handle such a storm event. Those areas are Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

To date, there have been ten confirmed deaths – all in the central/southern locales. Two in Nebraska, four in Kansas, one in Oklahoma, and three in Texas. All state roads across the affected states have been closed; however, the highway patrol suspects hundreds, if not thousands, are either stranded from the storm or trapped under the snowfall. Millions are without electricity and heavy snow has caused

many roofs to collapse, trapping people in their homes or businesses. There are reports of whole towns being completely under snowfall (although this is not yet confirmed). It is unclear the amount of damage caused; however, it is estimated to be in the billions. Volunteers are calling in from outside the affected area to help; however, they are unable to enter the affected states to help. Resources from affected states are overwhelmed. The U.S. President has declared nearly all of the United States as major disaster areas, allowing federal aid to support local and state efforts.

While the snow is slowing, it is still coming down. Therefore, there are concerns that when the snow starts to melt in the spring, there will be extreme flooding causing yet another disaster in these sections of the country.

Your Review: What do you tell your public? Factor out the issues and follow protocol to formulate your response to the discussion question and public service announcement.

Resources:

Current Results Publishing Ltd. (2018) Average yearly snowfall by American state. [Website]. Retrieved from <https://www.currentresults.com/Weather/US/average-snowfall-by-state.php>
Toolboss.com. (n.d.). Average Snowfall by State. [Website]. Retrieved from <https://thetoolboss.com/average-snowfall-us-states/>